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# What does it mean to be Embedded?

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# What does it mean to be Embedded?

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**College of Charleston, Charleston SC**

Good afternoon, and thank you so much for being here. My name is Elena Rodriguez and I am the Instruction Coordinator at the College of Charleston in Charleston, SC. Today I am going to be talking about what it means to be an embedded librarian in an academic library.

# *My Experience being Embedded*

1. Lead creator and coordinator of the Embedded Librarian Program at Horry Georgetown Technical College (two year college)
  2. Embedded in to classes both Face-to-Face and online classes in varying disciplines (English, Nursing, and Education)
  3. Serves as an Embedded Librarian at the established program at the College of Charleston (four year college)
  4. Assigns librarians and archivists to classes in the Embedded Program at the College.
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So some brief notes on my experience with Embedded Librarian Programs, I had the opportunity to lead the creation and coordinate an Embedded Librarian Program at a two year technical college in SC. I myself was embedded in face-to-face classes as well as online classes in different disciplines, but primarily english, nursing and education.

I left that institution and my program and came to the College of charleston where they already had an established Embedded Librarian Program of which I participate in and have been observing for the past year a half. As the Instruction Coordinator, I also work with faculty department heads for the groups we serve and assign librarians and archivists to classes. We are going to look at a snapshot of each program in a later slide, but it was the extreme differences in programs at these two colleges that really made me realize how customizable embedded librarianship can be, as well as some key components to having a successful program.

## Session Objectives

This session will:

1. discuss challenges institutions may face when creating an Embedded Librarian Program
2. highlight the importance of collaboration to ensure the success of students and an Embedded Librarian Program
3. suggest ways to engage with students to encourage success

In this session, we will discuss some challenges that may arise when creating a program, and that may reappear as the program evolves, as well as talking about the importance of collaboration and student engagement- both of which can also present challenges at times.

# Embedded

defined

“...Contemporary and emerging forms of embedded librarianship **go beyond** demonstrating librarians’ expertise and instead seek to “distribute” the library by helping novice learners (students) **build expertise** and to position the learning community in which they are embedded as a *participatory site of culture*” (Hamilton, p. 5).

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Hamilton, B. (2012). Embedded Librarianship: Tools and Practices. Chicago, Ill: ALA Editions.

I briefly want to talk some definitions. While Dave Shumaker has certainly been a leading voice in the Embedded Librarian field, I really like the way Buffy Hamilton talks about it, and that embedded librarianship goes beyond a librarians’ expertise and really distributes the library and skills to build expertise in the learners.

# Embedded

defined again

“Embedded librarianship is a model that embodies many possibilities for disrupting stereotypes of a library as a warehouse of books rather than a dynamic commonplace site where learning and people shape the narrative of the library experience for a learning community, whether it be a school, academic, or public library” (Hamilton, p. 27).

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Hamilton, B. (2012). *Embedded Librarianship: Tools and Practices*. Chicago, Ill: ALA Editions.

She goes on to say that being embedded also provides the opportunity to show that the library is a dynamic place where learning and people shape the narrative of the library experience for a community. To me I think this really showcases the collaborative nature of libraries and librarians.

# Challenges

and how to face them

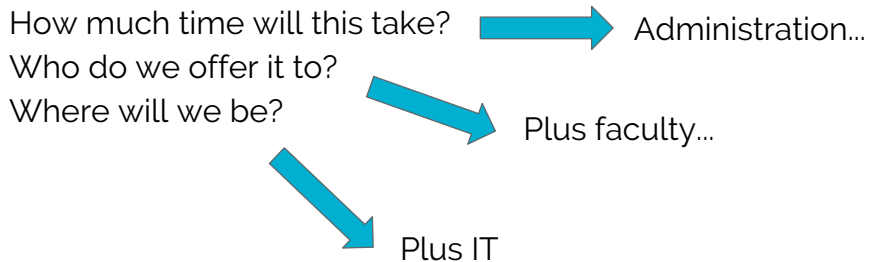


<http://www.memegen.com/meme/nix1rf>

So let's talk a bit about the challenges one might face in creating or changing an embedded librarian program, but please remember that all challenges ultimately offer an opportunity to improve the experience of both the users and the facilitators.

## Getting Approval

Start with a Conversation between Librarians...



The first challenge may come from getting approval. Start by deciding why you want to offer this type of program. Map out how you will assess student success as well as faculty satisfaction. How much time will you be able to devote to being embedded? Where will you be embedded into? If you are asking these questions and trying come up with answers, congratulations! You have likely begun the important task of collaboration! This is a conversation that needs to happen with your administration to ensure their support, with faculty to understand their interest, and with IT to solve the riddle of being embedded into your learning management software. All of these steps take time, so plan appropriately!



## The Available Resources vs. The Demand

### Horry Georgetown Technical College

- Created from scratch
- 4 librarians across 3 campuses
- Online, Face-to-Face, and Hybrid courses
- Multiple Disciplines
- Capped at 20 sections
  - Selected based on faculty interest (first come, first served)

### College of Charleston

- Established
- 12 Librarians and Archivists
- Online and Face-to-Face
- Embedded into **ALL** FYE and Freshmen English Course (ENGL 110)
  - Fall 2018: 115 sections

Part of that planning does unveil another possible challenge which is the available resources vs the demand. When we created the program at Horry Georgetown Tech, we were starting from scratch. We had four librarians across three campuses, and based on our faculty interest, we decided we would offer our service online, F2F, and also in hybrid courses. Being 4 librarians with varying responsibilities, we capped our service to 20 sections; this allowed each of us to roughly have 5 courses that we managed.

When I left Tech and came to CofC, there was already their version of an embedded program in place. Currently, we have 12 librarians and archivists who participate in both online and face to face courses, but we are embedded only in our freshman introductory courses- FYE and ENGL 110. Because of this there is no real cap; we are embedded into all of these sections- this Fall we have 115. A caveat to this, however, is that not all faculty end up taking full advantage of the offer, so while we are automatically embedded into 115 sections, we maybe only work with 75. The main thing to keep in mind here is that in both instances, we acknowledge our available resources and limitations. At Tech we had a cap so we weren't overwhelmed, and at the College, we are currently not embedded into any other disciplines.

“...Librarians should not limit themselves to what may seem currently prescribed, but instead **individualize the effort** based on the amount of time you can reasonably invest, the department or class you wish to embed in or with, your relationship or buy-in with a particular faculty member, the subject matter, and so on... [A]one-size-fits-all model of embedding does not take into account all of the many factors that go into embedding...” (Reale, p. xviii).

Reale, M. (2016). *Becoming an Embedded Librarian: Making Connections in the Classroom*. Chicago: ALA Editions.

From that, it's helpful to consider something that I think Michelle Reale states well here, and that is that librarians should not limit themselves to what may seem currently prescribed, but instead individualize the effort. Librarians should do what we do best and observe and study what has worked at other places, and apply them as necessary to fit our own situation. There is no one-size fits all model.

## Faculty Buy-In

HOW does this **help** the students?

1. Improve grades
2. Teaches Information Literacy skills
3. Helps students to view the library as more than a place to print

**SHOW** how it's **successful**.



Another challenge comes to getting faculty on board, and a way that was successful for us at Tech when we were first starting was to really showcase to faculty how this program would help their students. It also helps to find the one or two faculty members who are super library supporters and do a pilot with their classes. Use the data from those samples to share with other faculty; have them promote the session to their colleagues. An example of this in practice: we did a study where we approached faculty with two sections of the same course and were embedded into one. One of my courses was an English course, and the average grade on their final research paper in the course I was embedded in was a letter grade higher than the control course. This kind of data is helpful when getting other faculty to hopefully eagerly participate. And the more collaborative you are with faculty, the more opportunities you have to...

# Student Engagement

*...and engaging with students*

## **Instruction:**

Google Forms

EdPuzzles

Library Session(s)

Instructional Content

## **Online:**

Active in Discussion Boards

Posting Announcements



<https://sites.google.com/site/dovegeregpository/course-two/student-engagement>

...engage with students! This is the last challenge and necessary component if this program is going to succeed. It is essential to consider student engagement *and* engaging with students. It helps to break it down into two areas: Instruction and Online presence. Utilize products like Google Forms and EdPuzzles to have students engage with content. Use their responses as a way to assess their successes and assist in their errors. Depending on your faculty, try to do more than one library session or require students to meet with you in a research consultation. Create relevant instructional content to share with the students before and after a lesson. If the class actively participates in the LMS, respond to students' posts on Discussion boards when appropriate or post announcements promoting helpful content or research services. Also, remember to do what works best for you and the faculty member. Even doing two of these things would be helpful to the students.

**Final Advice...**  
**be ready to *change***

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So my final advice to you all is to be ready to change.

## Be ready to change things: Horry Georgetown Technical College

### THE PLAN:

Be embedded into course D2L and create an "Embedded Librarian" Discussion space for students.

Coordinate with faculty on Research Assignment to provide resources or in class instruction when available.

Survey students and faculty in the midterm, and meet with faculty at the end.

### THE PLAN 2.0:

Everything from Plan 1 PLUS

Required component for students to interact with their embedded librarian.

Create instructional content to share with students.

### THE PLAN 3.0:

Everything from Plan 1 & 2.0 PLUS

Access to adding announcements to the News Feed on D2L.

Provide faculty with set guidelines and a calendar for the semester.

Before I left Tech, we had just implemented the 3rd iteration of our program, all based on student and faculty feedback, both formal and informal. Each time we went along we found what worked best for us. We started very simply, and by the end, we had found that we were able to easily be more involved while not creating too much work for ourselves- this is especially in part to the fact that we capped our program.

## Look for the Opportunities to Grow: College of Charleston

The questions:

- How can we be **more** involved?
- How can we **expand**?
- Are we **actually** embedded?

At CofC, we are looking at how we can change to improve the program and the success of students, but this is a conversation that has to happen as a department. As I've been observing our role, I've been seeing the things that work and don't work. For example, I think we succeed in creating content and experiences that have students engaging critically with Information Literacy concepts. However, I also think that we could possibly be more involved, expand our services, and that we should really define what embedded means to our institution.

## **Look for the Opportunities to Grow: College of Charleston**

The ideas:

- Create a departmental definition for “embedded”
  - Develop goals and assessment measures

To that end, the hope is that as a department we can come up with our definition and really think about what a successful program looks like so that we can adapt as we continue. With a larger group of librarians and archivists willing to participate in the current program, I think there is real potential to do more without burdening ourselves.



## Suggested Reading

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Thank you so much for listening and your interest. As I've been researching embedded librarianship, I've found these materials to be helpful. I'll be sharing my slide deck in the future, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have!